Syria is one of the oldest places where civilization or life has thought to have started.

Its capital is one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in the world.

Throughout history it has seen many changes, violent and otherwise.

Today it is comprised or made of a number of ethnic groups, mostly Arab.

There have also been a number of Iraqi refugees that live there.

The Arab groups have different ideas and beliefs. This causes a lot of problems.

Around January 2011, conflict began against the government. This was not limited to Syria. Other countries in the Middle East also had significant problems.

Protesters in Syria came out demanding President Bashar al-Assad and his government step down.

In response, President Assad sent in troops with some cities and regions being besieged or surrounded for months.

Both pro and anti-government protest gatherings have at times been large.



Image: Demonstrations

Criticism of Syria’s crackdown has been quite widespread.

The Arab League has responded by suspending Syria’s membership.

Syria claims that it is fighting an insurgency- a fight against the government.

The ruling regime is a sect of Shia, so has support from Iran.

The opposition is largely Sunni, thus receiving support from other Middle East countries, such as Saudi Arabia and others.

**Thousands have been killed — civilians and armed combatants**.

Some are asking the West for a military intervention like there was in Libya, but the US in particular is not keen on another military intervention even though they have been openly hostile and critical of the Syrian ruling regime for many years.



**China and Russia also have close ties with Syria**

**They have not stopped the Syrians from battling.**

**Some say that Iran is helping Syria get weapons.**